

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY AUGUST 7, 2006

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY JUNE 21, 2006

AMENDED IN SENATE MAY 3, 2006

AMENDED IN SENATE APRIL 17, 2006

SENATE BILL

No. 1819

Introduced by Senator Figueroa

February 24, 2006

An act to add Chapter 15 (commencing with Section 11400) to Part 7 of the Education Code, relating to student financial aid, and making an appropriation therefor.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 1819, as amended, Figueroa. Student financial aid: cost assistance for GED test takers.

Existing law establishes the system of postsecondary education in this state, which consists of the California Community Colleges, the California State University, the University of California, and independent institutions of higher education. Existing law also establishes the public elementary and secondary schools of this state, and grants the Superintendent of Public Instruction numerous duties and responsibilities with respect to the governance of those schools.

This bill would express findings and declarations of the Legislature relating to the need for, and the costs of, *General Education Development (GED)* examinations ~~for the attainment of the general equivalency diploma~~.

The bill would establish the GED-CATT (Cost Assistance for GED Test Takers) Program under the joint administration of the board of governors and the Superintendent of Public Instruction. The bill would

provide that, under the program, commencing with the 2007–08 fiscal year, funds would be allocated by the board of governors or the superintendent to school districts that administer adult education programs and community college districts that administer noncredit programs in amounts proportionate to the base-year average daily attendance, with respect to school districts, and full-time equivalent students, with respect to community colleges, that are enrolled in GED preparation coursework in each participating district, *or in another manner, if agreed upon by the advisory committee established pursuant to the bill.*

The bill would provide that the availability, in any fiscal year, of allocations to participating districts or of grants to eligible students under the program would be contingent upon the appropriation of at least ~~\$250,000~~ \$50,000, no more than \$25,000 of which could be expended for the creation of a program eligibility form, for the purposes of the program in the annual Budget Act or in another measure.

The bill would appropriate \$50,000 from the General Fund, as scheduled, to the board of governors and the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the purposes of the program for the 2006–07 fiscal year.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: yes. Fiscal committee: yes.
State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

- 1 SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the
- 2 following:
- 3 (a) Particularly for low-income individuals, including those
- 4 receiving local, state, or federal assistance, the attainment of a
- 5 high school diploma or ~~general equivalency diploma (GED)~~ *the*
- 6 *passing of the General Education Development (GED)*
- 7 *examination* is critical to establishing self-sufficiency and
- 8 developing a well-paying career track.
- 9 (b) The gap between Californians who have not attained a high
- 10 school equivalency diploma and those with more education is
- 11 widening as opportunities increase for higher skilled workers.
- 12 Many entry-level positions require applicants to have attained the
- 13 equivalent of a high school education.

1 (c) Recent high school dropouts will earn two hundred
2 thousand dollars (\$200,000) less during their lifetime than peers
3 who have graduated from high school.

4 (d) The state loses billions of dollars in revenue each year
5 because high school dropouts are ill-prepared to join the
6 workforce, leading to higher unemployment and
7 underemployment rates.

8 (e) Each school year's worth of students dropping out results
9 in \$38.5 billion in lost wages, taxes, and workforce productivity
10 over their lifetimes.

11 (f) Current state and local programs designed to prepare
12 students for the GED lack funds to provide assistance for the
13 costs associated with taking the examination and for additional
14 expenditures that lead to student success.

15 (g) The State Department of Education reports that, on
16 average, "testing centers will charge approximately one hundred
17 dollars (\$100) to take the entire test, though some centers will
18 charge a higher or lower amount. Most centers will also charge a
19 fee if all or part of the test must be retaken. Testing center fees
20 include state and national fees plus the cost of materials, the cost
21 of scoring the essay portion of the test, and some of the costs of
22 test administration."

23 SEC. 2. Chapter 15 (commencing with Section 11400) is
24 added to Part 7 of the Education Code, to read:

25
26 CHAPTER 15. COST ASSISTANCE FOR GED TEST TAKERS
27

28 11400. (a) (1) The GED-CATT (Cost Assistance for GED
29 Test Takers) Program is hereby established under the joint
30 administration of the board of governors and the Superintendent
31 of Public Instruction. Under the program, funds shall be allocated
32 by the board of governors or the superintendent to school
33 districts that administer adult education programs and community
34 college districts that administer noncredit programs in amounts
35 proportionate to the base-year average daily attendance, with
36 respect to school districts, and full-time equivalent students, with
37 respect to community colleges, that are enrolled in GED
38 preparation coursework in each participating district, *or in*
39 *another manner, if agreed upon by the advisory committee*
40 *established pursuant to Section 11401.*

1 (2) *As used in this chapter, “GED test” means the General*
2 *Education Development (GED) examination.*

3 (b) Participating districts shall use the funds allocated under
4 this chapter for grants to students enrolled in GED preparation
5 coursework. These funds shall be used for GED test fees ~~and for~~
6 ~~required course materials and supplies. Additional funds may be~~
7 ~~awarded to individual students under criteria established by~~
8 ~~either the superintendent or the board of governors or by the~~
9 ~~participating districts for services including, but not necessarily~~
10 ~~limited to, student transportation costs.~~

11 (c) Allocations and grants shall be made pursuant to this
12 chapter commencing with the 2007–08 fiscal year, and the first
13 grants shall be awarded to students no later than March 1, 2008.
14 *For purposes of this chapter, need shall be determined pursuant*
15 *to the criteria on which the board of governors fee waiver, as set*
16 *forth in Section 76300, is based.*

17 11401. The board of governors and the superintendent shall
18 select the membership of, and convene, on or before June 30,
19 2007, an advisory committee, the duties of which shall include,
20 but not necessarily be limited to, the accomplishment of both of
21 the following at the direction of the board of governors and the
22 superintendent:

23 (a) Recommendations relating to the administration of the
24 program established under this chapter.

25 (b) Design of a simple application form, which shall be used to
26 acquire information related to a student’s eligibility for
27 need-based aid and for student certification. This form shall use
28 the criteria on which the board of governors fee waiver, as set
29 forth in Section 76300, is based, as well as any additional criteria
30 that are deemed appropriate by the board of governors or the
31 superintendent.

32 ~~11402. The criteria for eligibility for receipt of a grant under~~
33 ~~this chapter shall be either of the following:~~

34 ~~(a) Receipt of any public need-based assistance.~~

35 ~~(b) Household income that is at or below 150 percent of the~~
36 ~~national poverty level, as most recently calculated by the Bureau~~
37 ~~of the Census of the United States Department of Commerce.~~

38 ~~11403.~~

39 11402. On or before December 31, 2009, the board of
40 governors and the superintendent shall submit a report to the

1 Legislature and the Governor regarding the numbers and types of
2 students served in the first year of the operation of the program.
3 The board of governors shall issue a followup report regarding
4 the numbers and types of students in the subsequent years of the
5 program on or before December 31, 2012, and every three years
6 thereafter. Any additional criteria, including, but not necessarily
7 limited to eligibility, the grant application process, or funds
8 awarded to cover services adopted by the administering agencies
9 or the participating districts, shall also be included in the reports
10 required by this section.

11 ~~11404.~~

12 *11403.* The availability, in any fiscal year, of allocations to
13 participating districts or of grants to eligible students under this
14 chapter is contingent upon the appropriation of at least ~~two~~
15 ~~hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000)~~ *fifty thousand dollars*
16 *(\$50,000)* in the annual Budget Act or in another measure for the
17 awarding of student grants under this chapter, no more than
18 twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) of which may be used for
19 the creation of an eligibility form prior to the awarding of those
20 grants.

21 SEC. 3. The sum of fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) is hereby
22 appropriated from the General Fund for the purposes of program
23 administration under Chapter 15 (commencing with Section
24 11400) of Part 7 of the Education Code for the 2006–07 fiscal
25 year, in accordance with the following schedule:

26 (a) Twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) to the Board of
27 Governors of the California Community Colleges.

28 (b) Twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) to the
29 Superintendent of Public Instruction.